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ABSTRACT

Career education is probably best described as a group of concepts and processes, including career awareness, career exploration, infusion of career-oriented material with traditional educational resources, hands-on involvement, and participation in education by people normally employed in the world of work. Vocational education is simply one potential element of a comprehensive career education program. Career awareness, the first element of a career education program, should inform students of the spectrum of career choices in the labor market. One effective method of implementing career awareness is to concentrate on one career in each of the 16 career clusters that were identified in May 1978 by a group representing the work and education sectors and to use resource persons from the world of work. Career exploration, the next phase in a career education program, should allow students to explore the various types of careers available in their cluster of interest. Like career awareness activities, career exploration programs should make extensive use of representatives from the world of work. They could also use career education materials such as those available from the Curriculum Publications Clearinghouse in Illinois. Career preparation, the next phase in the career education process, can use actual skill training materials providing they are not too detailed. Skill training in high schools is presently divided into the following areas: agriculture, home economics, health care, industrial arts, and business. Although old career education practices such as career days should not be discontinued, schools should consider implementing career awareness-type programs such as this one. (MN)

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THE CAREER CLUSTER PROJECT

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January 10, 1987

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WHAT IS CAREER EDUCATION?

There are many perceptions of Career Education. It is difficult to establish any one definition on which people consistently agree. In fact, Career Education is probably best described as a group of concepts, and processes, including career awareness, career exploration, infusion of career-oriented material with traditional educational resources, hands-on involvement, participation in education by people normally employed in the world of work, and career training preparation, including professional skills, such as medicine, are all a part. However, each definition of Career Education undoubtedly emphasizes that education should serve the career needs of students, as well as the academic needs of students. Life education needs must also be met as yet a third goal of education, one even more in need of attention.

Vocational education, in the author's view is simply one potential element of a comprehensive Career Education Program, but in no way the same thing as Career Education.

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WHAT IS CAREER AWARENESS?

Aside from being the first element for a Career Education Program, career awareness is an organized effort to present information to students on the spectrum of career choices in the labor market. With some 35,000 different job classifications identified by the Department of Labor, a student could spend a lifetime considering each of them as possible career alternatives.

In view of the 35,000 job classifications, it is necessary to break the list down into clusters to help in organizing a meaningful career awareness program for students.

Some occupational clustering systems have been based on academic disciplines, some on the types of skills required.

In 1969, the U.S. Office of Education identified fifteen career clusters, some of which were goal-oriented, some skill-oriented and others discipline-oriented. This clustering system was used in an Awareness Program at New Trier East in 1975, but was felt to be deficient in its coverage of the spectrum of jobs. At a meeting of twenty-five people representative of the world of work and education, in May, 1978, sixteen goal-oriented clusters were identified. They include:

Agriculture
Arts, Culture & Religion
Built Environment
Communication
Education
Energy
Finance
Government
Health Care
Hospitality
Insurance
Manufacturing
Natural Resources
Personal & Business Services
Retailing/Wholesaling
Transportation

If was felt that there were some unique advantages in concentrating on the goal-oriented clusters, which are based on areas of human needs being served by jobs and organizations functioning within these clusters.

It was also felt that the necessary input to a school's Career Education Program by people from the world of work would be greatly facilitated because goal-oriented clusters would fit naturally with existing businesses and industries, each of which

must meet a need to survive, much less prosper. Also, "goal people are winners; process people are losers", it has been said.

The focus on the human needs being served by jobs within each cluster was considered to be an important element and one that would lead to much greater understanding of our microeconomic system. The microeconomic system is designed to maximize satisfaction of human wants and needs as expressed in the free marketplace. Profits are not the goal of a win-win business, but the reward for meeting human needs well and efficiently.

An awareness of our microeconomic system was also felt to be important to the individual's perception of himself or herself as an entrepreneur or potential entrepreneur, as well as a contributing member of a team, rather than simply looking for a job, whatever it does.

While this program has not focused on the additional human characteristics of ability and aptitudes, it is recognized that different individuals have unique abilities. An individual's ultimate selection of a career goal should make provisions for his or her skills, training, and education that is needed to achieve those goals. It is also felt, however, that once an individual is determined to achieve certain goals, individuals will become much better students and have higher levels of achievement in academic subjects as a result of the goal orientation of the career elements.

HOW SHOULD CAREER AWARENESS BE IMPLEMENTED?

Since some students may already have identified their career goals at the eighth grade level and many others in some form or another have limited their own interests, it is not prudent to "force" too much information on any student until there is some evidence that the student has an interest in that career area.

For this reason, it was considered desirable that the first exposure in the Career Awareness Program should be in the form of a single program on each cluster. It was also felt that a world of work resource other than a parent or teacher should meet with the students on each of the sixteen programs.

Initial attempts at implementing a Career Awareness Program with the new clusters were undertaken at the Hyde Park Career Academy in Chicago, in 1976. Speakers were eager to take part in the cluster program to help students. Sixteen assembly programs were instantly scheduled, with approximately 300 students participating in each.

The initial field test provided an excellent opportunity to evaluate the Career Awareness Program and to optimize planning.

It became clear, early on, that resources from the world of work could easily relate their own career development experiences and discuss other careers in the businesses and industries in which they are active participatns. However, with a few exceptions, they did not instantly perceive of the clustering concept based on human needs, at least not without an explanation of the Career Awareness Program.

Wall charts characterizing each of the clusters were designed, with the Human Needs in the center and the Activities by which needs are met surrounding and radiating from these needs. Booklets describing many of the job classifications within each cluster, and slide/tapes for each cluster, were identified as necessary ingredients for implementing an effective Career Awareness Program. Program cost and staffing considerations were also identified as barriers to implementation of the program. The per student cost of this program is almost nil, unless each student wants to buy or is given a book in his cluster of interest. There is no staffing cost. Outside volunteers, sponsored by private firms, are easy to arrange for.

These materials are available through the Illinois State Board of Education, Curriculum Publications Clearinghouse, at Western Illinois University, 47 Horrabin Hall, Macomb, Illinois 61455. Video tapes have, since the original project was completed, been developed by the author and are much lower in cost than the slide/tapes.

Wall charts for each cluster have been disseminated to secondary schools throughout the State of Illinois. Full sets of slide/tapes and booklets are available at Career Guidance Centers throughout the State of Illinois.

ALTERNATIVES FOR USE OF CAREER AWARENESS MATERIALS

The first attempt at a Career Awareness Program was initiated at New Trier East. It was met with little enthusiasm by the teachers, who considered it to be a vocational approach, even though every speaker had a college degree and was the president of his own company (YPO Members). The second attempt was at the Hyde Park Career Academy, where it was given only to the Magnet School students, perhaps least in need of help and guidance. This program is now in its eleventh year.

Glenbrook North has had a program underway for many years with a better studied, better planned procedure.

Each freshman at Glenbrook North has a required study hall each day. Every other week one study hall is replaced by a Career Awareness Program directed at one of the sixteen clusters. The Northbrook Volunteer Pool, a community group organized to assist the schools in finding resources on various subjects, assists Glenbrook North in obtaining resources from the community. They have obtained some outstanding persons willing to talk with the students in the study hall sized group.

Since there are nine freshmen study halls, the author as the first resource, gave nine talks. To ease the load, the school later obtained one resource for the morning and another for the afternoon.

With the slide/tapes available, and now the videotapes, to create the overview, resources are able to focus on their own career development and career opportunities in their organizations or professions, and are able to answer questions. It has proved desirable to have the speaker view the video tapes with the students.

There are most certainly other formats that have been and will be used. It is the opinion of the author that each student should be <u>required</u> to attend each of the sixteen clusters, even when the student might be predisposed toward a particular career. By having attendance compulsory, by infusion of the program with coursework instead of study halls, the programming will continue

The attached information on a program now in its fourth year at Avon School in Lake Villa, Illinois is of particular interest, including the infusion procedure. The Chicago Board of Education now has Awareness programs in 45 elementary schools.

WHAT'S NEXT? CAREER EXPLORATION

A Career Awareness Program can set the stage for each student to contemplate his or her career options. They may or may not associate with the goals and the human needs being served by the different clusters. Of course, each will want to consider his or her own skills and aptitudes, as well as their interests. Hopefully, the eight grader will pick a cluster.

If a student picks the Built Environment Cluster, for example, what next?

A Career Exploration Program has been developed whereby just those students interested in that cluster will hear six or eight speakers from the Built Environment.

Assuming that the Career Awareness Program is presented to eighth grade students, it is the intent that toward the end of the school year, students would participate in only one of the Career Exploration Programs for the cluster of interest.

There are many options for such programming, which will also depend on the size of the commmunity and the availability of resources.

For example, Glenbrook North has approximately 700 eighth grade students. Since there are sixteen clusters, there will then be approximately 45 students with an interest, or at least a tentative interest, in each cluster.

It is anticipated that the 45 students with an interest in the Built Environment Cluster would attend a three hour program with perhaps six speakers from the cluster. In the Built Environment Cluster suggested resources might include, but are not limited to: architects; surveyors; carpenters; plumbers; real estate sales people; mortgage loan officers; soil engineers; structural engineers; cost estimator; general contractors; specialty contractors; concrete ready-mix suppliers; representatives from building maintenance companies; draftsmen; painters and decorators; and others.

Optimally, those students finding an interest in a particular job classification or related classifications would be expected to talk in depth with the particular resource most closely related to the student's self-identified career goals. Summer jobs, shadowing experiences, work/study programs, part-time work, cooperative education programs, might evolve. As a minimum, the

student would get a good look at a future in that career.

The career exploration speaker may only talk to one group in the District each year. That is not a heavy burden. However, it does mean the Volunteer Pool, or the Guidance Counselor, or a Career Advisory Council has to organize an effective speakers bureau, unless Rotary or another industry group will take the lead.

In the Chicago area, for example, Chicago United, a consortium of the twenty-one major corporations in Chicago, developed a Career Resource Data Bank that has now been turned over to the Chicago Board of Education to assist in finding resources for the Awareness and Exploration Programs.

Transportation of the students from their grade school to the place where the Career Exploration Program is held must be arranged, perhaps by the counsellors, teachers and principal. Attendance must be supervised.

With regard to exploration materials, it is felt that many materials are already available, and will be brought by the speakers. If more careers are to be explored, a second program can be scheduled.

The job classifications within each cluster can be developed, using The Dictionary of Occupational Titles as a source document.

While a key part of the author's views on Career Awareness and Exploration Programs is the involvement of real people from the world of work, it is also recognized that to obtain sixteen speakers in each of sixteen clusters is a big job in a large city for a committee. Perhaps simulcasts can be used in large cities, or where it is hard to find a speaker in a small town, or where a speaker for one reason or another fails to attend. Perhaps Educational TV Stations will cooperate.

Materials available through the Curriculum Publications Clearinghouse in Illinois will certainly find a place on the list of potential career awareness and exploration materials to supplement the program of speakers.

CAREER PREPARATION

It is believed that materials are presently available for actual education and training materials for specific careers. Actually, some of the audiovisual materials that are used for skill training might be particularly useful as references for students contemplating careers in that particular career, providing they are not too detailed.

WHAT ABOUT AG, HOME EC, INDUSTRIAL, HEALTH CARE, AND BUSINESS?

These are the present five categories into which voc-ed programs are subdivided in High Schools, for example.

Agricultural mechanics of course clearly fits in with the Agriculture Cluster as a part of the whole cluster.

Health care fits in neatly as the Health Care Cluster.

Industrial fits perhaps most closely with the Manufacturing Cluster, but actually involves most other clusters to some degree.

Home economics is a highbred classificiation that includes concepts of life education in the area of homemaking and consumer education, but also includes some skills that are closely allied to the Hospitality Cluster and to the Personal and Business Services Cluster.

The business aspect of the existing voc-ed program is closely related to all of the sixteen clusters, since every microeconomic unit has business activities. Therefore the business cluster is, strictly speaking, a horizontal slice through each of the goal-oriented career clusters.

converted to manual training courses for all students. After all, lawyers and doctors must drive cars, live in houses, and hang pictures, all requiring manual skills. All engineers need drafting skills to express their creative thoughts.

WHAT NEXT

Since there are many new concepts and new activities involved with this program, it most certainly will take time for the educational system to use these materials. However, it should not cost much to start a program and the cost cannot be presented as the reason a program is not started. State and Federal subsidies are not necessary, certainly through the Career Awareness and Exploration levels.

Some of the older career orientation programs, such as Career Days, should not be stopped, though the Career Awareness concept would seem to be much easier to implement and also will provide much greater input to the students.

Your thoughts, criticisms, and suggestions are welcome. Please address them to the author, c/o STS Consultants, Ltd., 111 Pfingsten Road, Northbrook, Illinois 60062, 312/273-5440.